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3/10/11
HB 456

Chairman Murphy-Members of the Committee

My name is Michael O'Neil, I am a parent of two daughters in the Helena public schools. I am also Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Helena Public Schools. I have been a life-long advocate for the needs of children and our communities.

I am here today to ask you to Vote No on HB 456 to best protect the health and well being of Montana's children and youth.

HB 456 is designed to keep Montana students from critical age appropriate health, scientific, and medical information they can use to postpone sexual activity and avoid the potentially life-long health and life risks associated with sexual activity. Teen pregnancy and STD rates are increasing significantly among our youth in Montana and HB 456 will make certain that they will increase even further. Passing HB 456 will have the effect of having Montana's youth becoming sexually active at earlier ages while increasing both the teen pregnancy and abortion rates.

The bill will also serve to create barriers and censor materials for students receiving instruction in a variety of academic areas including English, Science, and Health among others. The provisions will be used to censor a wide variety of curriculum materials in a variety of academic areas.

The result will be that Montana's youth will be ill prepared for important aspects of their lives.

HB 456 further restricts where and from whom medically and scientifically accurate information can be obtained on a narrow ideological basis solely.

HB 456 will create the foundation for expensive litigation in school districts across the state. School districts will be forced to adopt expensive procedures to implement HB 456. The fiscal note written before bill amendments were made ignores what will be significant expenses to local school districts across this state creating an unfunded state mandate upon local community schools. HB 456 is an unprecedented intrusion on the historically recognized local control of our Montana public schools.

Most systems will simply go to the path of least resistance and rather than providing medically and scientifically accurate instructional materials will simply instead censor the information students will receive.

Please vote no on HB 456.

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